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A-ONE #1524 06/21/13

~ Microsoft Bounty Offer! ~ People Are Talking! ~ Yahoo To Use Old IDs!
~ Firefox's Do Not Track! ~ Japanese Politicians! ~ Pirate Bay Founder!
~ Pre-orders Break Record ~ Dotcom Was 'In Tears'! ~ Where The Teens Go!

~ 360 Mainframe Nears 50! ~ RI and 38 Studios Bond ~ First Apple, Big $$$?

-* MS Changes Xbox One Policies *-
-* Steam Might Let You Borrow Games! *-
-* Cyber Threats, Leaks Spur Increased Focus! *-

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->From the Editor's Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"
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Welcome to the first day of Summer; and it certainly felt like it today around here. While I have no idea where this past Spring season went, I really welcome the new season. Time to relax a little, hopefully. Time to make frequesnt use of the barbecue, and have a few (okay, a lot) of cold ones. Maybe a trip to the beach if I get the opportunity! After this past year of madness, we deserve a little break from it all!

Until next time...

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - Microsoft Changes Xbox One Policies After Out cry!
"""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""

Xbox One Will Not Require Internet, Restrict Used Games!

Steam Might Let You Borrow Friends' Games!
And more!

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!
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Microsoft Reverses Position on Xbox One Internet, Game Sharing

Microsoft Corp said on Wednesday that users of its forthcoming Xbox One game console will be able to play games offline without establishing an Internet connection, and will be able to lend or sell used disc-based games.

The announcement reverses the company's position when it unveiled the

console in May, causing consternation among hardcore gamers.

The company had reversed its earlier stance on used games and daily online authentication after listening to "candid feedback" from its fans, Don Mattrick, president of the Interactive Entertainment Business at Microsoft, said in a blog post on Wednesday.

Last week at the Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3) in Los Angeles, Microsoft announced a $499 price tag for its first new Xbox in eight years and said it would go on sale in the United States in November in 21 countries.

Its rival, Sony Corp, said it would sell the next-generation PlayStation model for $399 late in the year. At an E3 presentation to announce features of the PlayStation 4, Sony drew cheers from the audience when it said the PS4 would run second-hand games and did not require an always-on Internet connection.

Before changing its policy, Microsoft had elicited groans from gamers when it announced that used games could be played on the Xbox One for a fee to be determined by game publishers and said players had to log onto the Internet for authentication.

"You told us how much you loved the flexibility you have today with games delivered on disc. The ability to lend, share, and resell these games at your discretion is of incredible importance to you," Mattrick said in his blog post. "Also important to you is the freedom to play offline, for any length of time, anywhere in the world."

Microsoft Changes Xbox One Policies After Outcry

Microsoft rolled back a much-criticized requirement that its upcoming Xbox One gaming console be regularly connected to the Internet and made clear that there will be no limitations on sharing games.

Microsoft Corp. has been criticized for vague statements about whether it will allow Xbox One buyers to play secondhand software. Gamers also expressed distaste for a requirement that the console be connected to the Internet once every 24 hours.

Don Mattrick, president of Microsoft’s Interactive Entertainment business, said in a blog post Wednesday that an Internet connection will no longer be required to play games on the Xbox One after its initial setup, and users can share and play games like they have on the Xbox 360.

Mattrick said the changes are in response to feedback Microsoft received since unveiling plans for the console in May.

"You told us how much you loved the flexibility you have today with games delivered on disc. The ability to lend, share, and resell these games at your discretion is of incredible importance to you," he wrote. "Also important to you is the freedom to play offline, for any length of time, anywhere in the world."

In a shot aimed at Microsoft, rival Sony Corp. announced during last week’s Electronic Entertainment Expo in Los Angeles that its upcoming PlayStation 4 will not require a regular Internet connection to work and

that the company won’t try to restrict used game sales.

Both consoles will go on sale later this year, the Xbox One at $499 and the PS4 at $399.

Xbox One Will Not Require Internet, Restrict Used Games

Microsoft has changed its policies regarding Xbox One s internet requirements, used game restrictions and more.

Contrary to the details announced earlier this month, Microsoft has now confirmed news originally reported on Giant Bomb that Xbox One will not require an internet connection to play offline games or need to check in every 24 hours; instead, internet will only be required when initially setting up the console.

"After a one-time system set-up with a new Xbox One, you can play any disc based game without ever connecting online again," Microsoft wrote. "There is no 24 hour connection requirement and you can take your Xbox One anywhere you want and play your games, just like on Xbox 360."

Like on Xbox 360, "playing disc based games will require that the disc be in the tray."

I would like to take the opportunity today to thank you for your assistance in helping us to reshape the future of Xbox One.

Xbox One will also no longer restrict used games, and will instead allow discs to be exchanged in the same way they are on Xbox 360. There will be no additional restrictions for trade-ins or lending games to friends. The system is also no longer be region locked and all downloaded games will function the same way whether your console is connected or not.

"Since unveiling our plans for Xbox One, my team and I have heard directly from many of you, read your comments and listened to your feedback," Microsoft’s Don Mattrick wrote. "I would like to take the opportunity today to thank you for your assistance in helping us to reshape the future of Xbox One. You told us how much you loved the flexibility you have today with games delivered on disc. The ability to lend, share, and resell these games at your discretion is of incredible importance to you. Also important to you is the freedom to play offline, for any length of time, anywhere in the world."

In addition to being available in retail stores, Xbox One games will still be available for download on day one and will be playable on any Xbox One console.

"These changes will impact some of the scenarios we previously announced for Xbox One," Mattrick noted. "The sharing of games will work as it does today, you will simply share the disc. Downloaded titles cannot be shared or resold."

"We appreciate your passion, support and willingness to challenge the assumptions of digital licensing and connectivity," Mattrick concluded. "While we believe that the majority of people will play games online and access the cloud for both games and entertainment, we will give consumers the choice of both physical and digital content. We have listened and we

have heard loud and clear from your feedback that you want the best of both worlds."

Microsoft’s decision follows mass confusion following the announcement of Xbox One in May. At E3 last week, Sony announced similar policies for PlayStation 4, which will not require an internet connection or periodic authentication and does not restrict used games.

Xbox One DRM Restrictions Dropped After Gamer Outcry

Microsoft has sensationally abandoned its controversial plans to restrict the sharing of Xbox One games, and has also removed daily online authentication requirements for its forthcoming console.

In a statement released on the Xbox website on Wednesday, Don Mattrick, the president of Microsoft’s interactive entertainment business, wrote that the company had listened to "candid feedback" from gamers. Before listing the changes, his explanation reads, "You told us how much you loved the flexibility you have today with games delivered on disc. The ability to lend, share, and resell these games at your discretion is of incredible importance to you. Also important to you is the freedom to play offline, for any length of time, anywhere in the world."

When the new console is released this November, there will be no need to authenticate the system online every 24 hours a requirement thought to have been introduced as a digital rights management measure. According to the statement, "After a one-time system set-up with a new Xbox One, you can play any disc based game without ever connecting online again."

Furthermore, plans to restrict the sales of pre-owned titles, as well as the sharing of games among friends, have also been cancelled. There will now be no limits on gifting, re-selling, sharing or renting Xbox One game titles. In addition to these reversals, Microsoft is also removing regional locks on Xbox One games, which means titles bought in one global territory will work in all others.

The announcement follows a huge backlash against Microsoft which began when the company first revealed the Xbox One console at a press conference in May. Company representatives explained to journalists that all Xbox One games would need to be fully installed onto systems before play and that each copy would then be watermarked to its owner. Attempts to then sell on or give away the boxed copy of the game would be controlled by Microsoft; although the details have always been ambiguous, it appeared that the company would work with selected retail partners for the sale of pre-owned titles, and that publishers may have had the opportunity to charge purchasers of second-hand discs for the right to play.

There were also confusing propositions on sharing games with others. Microsoft informed gamers that they would be able to make their software library available to 10 friends, but that concurrent access to games would not be possible. Considered by industry insiders as an intriguing feature it has now been removed, as have other interesting possibilities. "There is some give and some take," said Brian Blau, a research director at Gartner. "The rules about used games have now been removed but the cool feature where you could go to a friends house and play your games

(by signing in and downloading them from your library) has been removed, or at least partially removed."

Some pundits feel that Microsoft's error has been in poorly explaining its vision for a new era of digitally-centered console gaming. The company attempted to push its proposals as a forward-looking approach to games distribution, inspired by iTunes and the PC gaming service Steam. But for a huge number of gamers, the negatives of the restrictions outweighed any positive possibilities. On Wednesday night, high profile games designer Cliff Bleszinski hit Twitter to claim that the original Xbox One infrastructure would have helped to prevent piracy and ensure publishers made money from second-hand sales. "Brace yourselves. More tacked on multiplayer and DLC are coming," he wrote; followed by "I want *developers* who worked their asses off to see money on every copy of their game that is sold instead of Gamestop."

At the major E3 video game conference in June, Sony used the widescale backlash against Microsoft's plans to boost the popularity of its rival PlayStation 4 machine. At Sony's E3 press conference, company executives made it clear that PS4 would place no restrictions on pre-owned sales and wouldn't require daily online authentication the announcements received a huge applause. Earlier this week, Amazon ran a poll on its website, asking readers to vote for PS4 or Xbox One as the best next-gen console; some US sites are reporting that the results were so overwhelmingly skewed toward the Sony console, the online retailer removed the survey.

"This reversal is a positive move for Microsoft as they need to compete strongly against the PS4," said Blau. "It's a really good sign that Microsoft is listening and providing the functions and features that their core audience is asking for. This has to help improve the overall impression that some may have had about Microsoft being a bully when it comes to video game DRM."

Xbox One is the follow-up to Microsoft's hugely successful Xbox 360 console, launched in 2005. The machine will feature an eight-core CPU, Blu-ray player and a more advanced version of its Kinect motion control device. PlayStation 4 is also set to launch this winter. Both now face a very different fight for the support of the huge global gaming audience.

Steam Might Let You Borrow Friends' Games More Easily Than Next-gen Consoles

A snippet of code in the Steam digital distribution platform has revealed that Valve may be planning to let users easily share their games with friends in the future. The Verge has verified the code's authenticity, which was originally spotted by a member of the NeoGAF gaming forum; the code references a "shared game library" and a notification that would alert a user when their games are currently in use by a borrower. Steam users can, of course, already share their games by lending friends their usernames and passwords, but that's not the most efficient or secure method of sharing.

A shared game feature would be a huge addition to the Steam platform, and a highly attractive feature in light of Sony and Microsoft's battle over sharing and used game policies for their next-generation consoles. Sony has seized recent confusion over the Xbox One's restrictive policies to insist that it will not impose restrictions on used games, but sharing

games on either console will still generally require users to swap discs (unlike Sony, Microsoft will let Xbox One users create a shared game library for up to 10 family members).

While Steam is primarily used on traditional PCs, Valve has been pushing to create a console-like PC running Steam called the Steam Box, which could compete with traditional consoles in the living room. PC gamers can already create their own Steam Boxes since the release of Steam's Big Picture Mode, but Valve plans to bring its own hardware to the living room in the future.

PS4/Xbox One Pre-Orders Break Amazon Records, Double All Black Friday Game Sales in a Day

Random iOS developers love to say that consoles are dead, pointing to the declining sales of the PS3 and Xbox 360, as well as the non-starter that was the Wii U. Thankfully, it looks like they re all wrong Amazon has revealed that the PS4 and Xbox One are selling faster than free kittens covered in hotcakes.

The world s largest online retailer told us that the Amazon Video Games store made history with its biggest pre-order week ever , with more than 2,500 Xbox One and PlayStation 4 consoles sold per minute at its peak. That s nearly two times that of all video games sales on Black Friday last year , despite Black Friday being the biggest shopping day of the year, and those figures including all video game platforms and games, as well as all the lightning deals the company holds. Wow.

The figure not surprisingly trounced last year s E3, with an increase in console orders of more than 4,000% over E3 2012.

We asked Amazon which console sold more, but they have yet to comment. The $399 PS4 was on top of the Amazon charts all of last week, with the launch edition selling out, and an Amazon PS4 vs XBO poll infamously saw 95% of the votes in Sony s favor, but the $499 Xbox One did take the number one spot this week even before Microsoft reversed its unpopular DRM plan. However, considering there is only one Xbox in the charts compared to several PS4 bundles, it s hard to say who is winning now.

Do you think that the early sales lead of the PS4, buoyed by a cheaper price and Xbox One hatred, will allow the console to keep up the momentum? And how crazy do you think this year s Black Friday sales will be?

Rhode Island On Track To Make Payment On 38 Studios Bonds

Rhode Island remains on track to make a $2.5 million interest payment next year on bonds that were used to finance the facilities of 38 Studios, a now-bankrupt videogame company founded by former Boston Red Sox pitcher Curt Schilling.

The state's House Finance Committee approved a budget late Tuesday night that included making an interest payment next May on $75 million of taxable bonds that the state sold in 2010 to make a loan to the company and lure it to Rhode Island.

The company’s loan payments were originally supposed to secure the bonds. Now the state could wind up paying $89 million for them, according to its director of administration, Richard Licht.

Recently, some lawmakers had suggested the state walk away from the debt as it confronts a budget gap of $30 million for the fiscal year starting July 1, raising concerns about Rhode Island’s credit rating and also about the willingness of issuers in the $3.7 trillion municipal bond market to honor their debts.

The state legislature will have to approve funds each year to make the interest payments. Even if it approves a transfer this year, it is not obligated to make one next year, Finance Committee Chairman Helio Melo said.

The state budget must still pass the entire House and then be approved by the Democrat-controlled Senate.

Worried their fellow lawmakers will abandon the bonds, Democratic leaders in the Senate called a special caucus earlier on Tuesday evening, where Licht and State Deputy Treasurer Mark Dingley warned that the municipal bond market would penalize Rhode Island if it defaulted on the debt.

"This isn’t about 38 Studios. It’s about protecting our reputation," Licht said, adding there were options to refinance the debt so that it pays less interest.

On Monday Moody’s Investors Service downgraded its rating of the bonds and also put $2.1 billion of Rhode Island’s debt under review for possible downgrade.

"Failure is contagious," Licht also said, adding that ratings would drop across the state in the advent of default, in turn pushing up the costs of borrowing for all Rhode Island’s issuers.

That could prove painful for the small state and its towns, which have struggled in recent years with high unemployment and with covering the costs of their public pensions.

When it went under last year, 38 Studios - named after Schilling’s Major League jersey number - said it had owed more than $150 million and had less than $22 million in assets. Schilling said the company cost him $50 million of his own fortune.

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A-ONE’s Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Cyber Threats and Leaks Spur Increased Security Focus

Increased cyber espionage by China and recent leaks by a contractor working at the National Security Agency have put a sharp focus on cyber security for aerospace and defense companies showing off their wares at this year’s Paris Airshow.

"We, like others, are constantly being bombarded by people who are trying to get into our systems," said Mark DeYoung, chief executive of U.S. rocket engine and ammunition maker Alliant Techsystems (ATK).

ATK, Lockheed Martin Corp, Boeing Co and other defence companies report hundreds of thousands of attempted probes into their computer networks every day, a matter of growing concern to the U.S. government, which after years of silence has become far more open about its belief that China is actively stealing intellectual property.

Trade shows, especially in foreign countries, pose particular challenges given the large array of people coming in contact with top executives who have access to sensitive information. In recent years, training has focused heavily on avoiding any violations of U.S. export control laws, but cyber security was a huge focus this year.

"The threat is not exaggerated," Dave Hess, president of Pratt & Whitney, a unit of United Technologies Corp, said. "It’s a significant issue that we’re all struggling with."

ATK disclosed several months ago that its networks had been attacked, but DeYoung said no classified or protected information was lost.

He said every ATK employee attending this year’s air show took part in an extensive security briefing before coming and the company has invested millions of dollars in recent years to stay ahead of constantly changing data security threats.

Only new, encrypted laptops may be used, and executives are warned about disclosing sensitive information in any phone call, text message, email or even conversation, "whether you think you’re in a private room or car or not," DeYoung said.

Two weeks ago, half a dozen FBI experts joined by officials from other government agencies gave a two-hour briefing on cyber security issues for DeYoung’s top dozen executives.

"The sophistication of the people who are trying to get into our systems continues to increase," DeYoung said.

"If you’re comfortable, you’re probably in trouble, but we’re quite confident that we’re putting in place all the right kinds of protocols, processes, training and people to keep up with the threat."

Raytheon executives also participate in a lengthy security briefing before the show, but they are not allowed to travel with a laptop at all, said William Swanson, chief executive of Raytheon Co.

Swanson said the disclosure of classified data by former NSA contractor Edward Snowden, who worked for Booz Allen Hamilton, had reinforced the need for vigilant security.

"Every good company always questions everything when they get new information," he said.

Chris Raymond, who heads business development for the defence division of Boeing, said his company had rigorous security processes in place given the massive size of the parent company’s global networks.

He said the increasing openness of the Obama administration about cyber espionage by China and others underscored the importance of building cyber security into every weapons system from the start, but acknowledged that the market for cyber security services was not developing as quickly as some companies in the sector had hoped.

President Barack Obama earlier this month called on his Chinese counterpart, Xi Jinping, to acknowledge the threat posed by "cyber-enabled espionage" against the United States and investigate the problem.

Microsoft Offers Hefty Bounties To Thwart Hackers

Microsoft Corp is looking to recruit computer geeks in its ongoing efforts to protect Windows PCs from attacks, offering rewards of as much as $150,000 to anybody who helps identify and fix major security holes in its software.

Microsoft unveiled the rewards program, one of the most generous in the high-tech industry to date, on Wednesday as it sought ways to prevent sophisticated attackers from subverting new security technologies it has introduced in the latest versions of the Windows operating system.

The program is open to computer experts as young as 14, though minors need permission from their parents. Residents of countries under U.S. sanctions, such as Cuba, Iran, North Korea, Sudan and Syria, are banned from the program.

The sheer size of the bonus is likely to grab the attention of the hacking community, though claiming the big money will require them to do battle with Microsoft’s latest anti-hacking technology and then detail their approach.

"It’s pretty generous, though what they are asking for is a pretty high bar," said Chris Wysopal, chief technology officer of Veracode, a security firm that helps identify software bugs.

Microsoft has plenty of competition in getting elite hackers to turn their attention on its aging Windows franchise, which operates the vast majority of the world’s personal computers.

Windows computers have been involved in most major attacks to date, including the recent Citadel cyber crime ring that stole more than $500 million from banks and the Stuxnet virus that attacked Iran’s nuclear program in 2010 by exploiting previously unknown bugs in Microsoft software.

The best hackers are heavily recruited by the military, intelligence agencies and big corporations, who lure them with scholarships and high-paying jobs.

Microsoft is also competing for the attention of the top hacking talent on a growing global gray market, where information about vulnerabilities

is sold to criminals as well as governments that use it in military and intelligence operations. Bounties start at $50,000 for tools that enable attackers to break into computers, even when they are protected by up-to-date security software.

In the industry, exploits of such vulnerabilities are called "zero-days," because a targeted software maker has had zero days' notice to fix the hole when the malicious software is eventually discovered.

Mike Reavey, senior director with the Microsoft Security Response Center, declined in an interview to talk about the "zero day" market for vulnerabilities in Windows products, saying the company was seeking to encourage hackers to use their skills in helpful ways.

"It's difficult to comment on the dark side," he said. "The intention of these (bounty) programs is to incentivize good behavior."

Reavey said he hoped Microsoft's new program would woo some candidates away from an annual contest known as Pwn2Own (pronounced "pown to own"), which has become a key venue for elite hackers to disclose major security flaws in software.

The latest Pwn2Own, which was held in Vancouver in March and sponsored by Hewlett-Packard Co, paid out nearly $480,000 in prize money, according to HP's website.

Hackers won the competition by identifying new ways to "pwn," or take ownership of, browsers from Microsoft, Firefox and Google Inc, Oracle Corp's Java and Adobe System Inc's Flash and Reader software.

Some other big technology firms already offer similar programs. Google has handed out $1.7 million in 3 years, including prizes as big as $60,000. Facebook Inc said it has paid out $500,000 to $1 million since it began its program two years ago. Adobe does not offer bounties, though it brings in hackers as temporary consultants to help fix problems that they identify.

Microsoft is also running a one-month contest, starting July 26, offering bounties of up to $11,000 to hackers who find bugs in the trial version of its new Internet Explorer 11 browser, which will be in preview release.

Dotcom 'In Tears' After Megaupload Files Deleted

Megaupload founder Kim Dotcom said Thursday he was "in tears" after a European company deleted all the data it was hosting from his shuttered file-sharing site.

Netherlands-based LeaseWeb announced it had deleted all Megaupload files from 630 servers.

LeaseWeb said in a statement it hosted the data for over a year at its own expense without receiving any requests to access it or retain it before deciding the time had come to use the servers for other purposes.

But Dotcom said in a series of Twitter posts that his lawyers repeatedly asked LeaseWeb to keep the data pending U.S. court proceedings.

Dotcom said that millions of users' personal files had been lost in the "largest data massacre in the history of the Internet."

U.S. authorities shut down Megaupload last year and indicted Dotcom and other executives. Prosecutors accuse them of racketeering by facilitating massive copyright fraud. Dotcom says he's innocent and can't be held responsible for those who chose to use Megaupload to illegally download songs or movies.

LeaseWeb's deletions would mostly affect former Megaupload users in Europe. Other Megaupload files remain stored on U.S. servers.

U.S. attempts to extradite Dotcom from his home in New Zealand have been delayed as his complex legal case plays out. His extradition hearing is now scheduled for November.

Dotcom this year started a new site called Mega. The deletions do not affect that site.

Pirate Bay Founder Sentenced to 2 Years in Sweden Hacking Case

A co-founder of file-sharing website Pirate Bay was sentenced to two years in jail on Thursday for hacking into computers at a company that manages data for Swedish authorities and making illegal online money transfers, a court said.

Gottfrid Svartholm Warg was extradited to Sweden last year from Cambodia to begin a one-year jail sentence after being convicted in 2009 of internet piracy. He was then charged by authorities as part of the separate hacking investigation.

"The hacking has been very extensive and technically advanced," the Nacka district court said in a statement. "The attacker has affected very sensitive systems."

He had denied the charges.

Prosecution documents say Warg, a 28-year-old Swede, managed to transfer 24,200 Danish crowns ($4,300) online, but also attempted, in several different transactions, to transfer a total of around 683,000 euros ($915,500).

The investigation was into data infringement involving outsourcing firm Logica.

Swedish authorities have said the hackers gained access to information on several people with protected identities.

In the 2009 trial, a court in Sweden - where The Pirate Bay was founded in 2003 - fined and sentenced to jail Warg and two co-founders then behind the site for breaching copyright in a case brought by firms including Sony Universal Music and EMI.

Swedish prosecutors in May launched a new attempt to close down Pirate Bay, which provides links to music and movie files stored on other users' computers.

The site is now run by an unknown group and uses a domain name registered in Sint Maarten, a Dutch territory in the Caribbean.

Social Network Gaffes Plague Japanese Politicians

On the Internet, no one can save you from yourself. That is a lesson many Japanese politicians have learned recently in painful, awkward and at times costly fashion.

In the latest flap, a senior reconstruction official in charge of helping victims of the Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear crisis was dismissed last week after he used a scatological insult on Twitter to deride civil activists.

Another official’s loss of composure at a U.N. committee meeting might have gone unnoticed in another time, but today it’s on YouTube. Even Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has been reproached for remarks on Facebook that some deemed disrespectful to his opponents.

Japan only began allowing use of social media in political campaigns in April. As campaigning heats up for a pivotal July 21 election for the upper house of parliament, this relatively new tool for reaching the public appears as much a liability as it is a blessing.

Japanese politicians and government agencies control access to information through a system of press clubs, and to keep their memberships, traditional Japanese media often have overlooked politicians’ gaffes. Politicians’ aides also help them avoid making embarrassing comments on TV and in print media. But those filters disappear when a politician posts a comment online.

"It takes only one emotional sentence. Once you hit the comment or tweet button, it’s too late. You’re caught by gaffe watchers on the net, with your true nature exposed," said Junichiro Nakagawa, an editor at the Internet news site Shunkan Research News.

Yasuhisa Mizuno, the former Reconstruction Agency official for Fukushima-Dai-ichi victims, was fired over this tweet: "Attended a meeting where I was merely yelled at by leftist (vulgarity). Surprisingly, I’m not outraged. I only have pity for their lack of intelligence."

He posted the comment March 7, but it was overlooked for several weeks before "gaffe watchers" discovered it and made it more widely known.

In late May, Hideaki Ueda, Japan’s representative to the United Nations’ committee on torture, shouted while defending Japan’s judicial system against criticism by an envoy from Mauritius who said its lack of protections for suspects’ rights was "medieval."

Speaking in somewhat broken English in footage shown on YouTube and an official website, Ueda said, "Certainly Japan is not the Middle Age. We are one of the most advanced country in the field."

To giggles from the audience, he shouted, "Don’t laugh! Why you are laughing?"

"Shut up! Shut up!" he said. By Wednesday the video had been viewed on YouTube more than 200,000 times. The footage was also repeatedly shown on

mainstream Japanese TV and in newspapers until the Foreign Ministry reprimanded him last week.

Osaka Mayor Toru Hashimoto said and tweeted that sex slavery by Japan's Imperial Army before and during World War II was a "necessary" wartime evil. He also used Twitter to post his suggestion that the U.S. military patronize adult entertainment to help reduce sex crimes committed by American troops.

U.S. officials characterized the comments as "outrageous and offensive." Hashimoto, a co-founder of the nationalist Japan Restoration Party, apologized, but only for his adult entertainment remark. He has continued tweeting his assertions about the Imperial Army's use of prostitutes.

Sophia University political science professor Koichi Nakano said gaffes by politicians and others spotlight a lack of sensitivity to a variety of issues, and to opposing views.

"The society that leaves such problems unchecked could become one that is insensitive," Nakano said. "People gradually lose sensitivity and then think nothing of it anymore."

One word that has drawn attention is "leftist," which is being used as a catch-all term for liberals supportive of minority rights and pacifism, and who sometimes challenge conservative values.

The media and the political opposition are taking Abe to task for using the term too casually. Abe has also called former Prime Minister Naoto Kan a leftist, criticizing his civil activist background and relatively lenient stance toward North Korea.

Abe, who is known for his nationalist and hawkish views, complained in a recent Facebook entry about hecklers at a public rally. "A group of leftists came into the crowd, intensely trying to interfere with my speech by shouting into a loudspeaker and banging drums, full of hatred," he wrote

"Mr. Abe, what do you mean by 'leftists?'" asked Hideo Matsushita, senior editor at the liberal-leaning Asahi newspaper, in a commentary published Sunday.

Many of the hundreds of comments attached to Abe's Facebook entry expressed support for his remark, along with hatred of the political left, ethnic Koreans and China. But others questioned for using the word "leftists" to describe hecklers who were apparently opposing Abe's plans to join a U.S.-led trans-Pacific trade bloc.

Matsushita said Abe showed a lack of respect for dissent and was fanning animosity toward Japan's neighbors and ethnic minorities.

"What's the point of making a distinction between the left and the right?" he asked.

Since taking office in December, Abe has mainly focused on the economy. But his wider agenda includes revising Japan's pacifist constitution to allow a stronger military and building what he calls a "beautiful country" through patriotic education, traditional family values and respect for the emperor. Some critics say his plans harken back to the militaristic atmosphere prevailing before and during World War II.

The emergence of Hashimoto’s Japan Restoration Party and the Liberal Democrats’ victory in December elections is seen by many in Japan as a swing to the right that has been accompanied by verbal attacks on Japan’s sizable ethnic Korean minority both on the Internet and in street protests, where members of ultra-rightist groups have shouted threats like "Kill Koreans" and "Go back to Korea."

Hundreds of thousands of Koreans comprise Japan’s largest ethnic minority group. Many are descendants of workers shipped to Japan during its 1910-1945 colonial rule of Korea. Decades later, they still face widespread discrimination in education, business and marriage.

Anti-Korean sentiments have prompted a group of lawmakers and experts to propose excluding "hate speech" from the constitutionally guaranteed right to freedom of expression.

"These problems underscore Japan’s lack of human rights awareness, and the world is raising its eyebrows," said Kazuko Ito, a lawyer who heads Japan’s branch of Human Rights Now.

Firefox Brushes Off Advertisers, Plows Ahead with Do Not Track

Anyone looking to search the web without being tracked by advertisers will soon be able to use Mozilla s Firefox browser without worries. The Washington Post reports that Mozilla is moving ahead with plans to implement a Do Not Track system that will let users opt out of the most common types of tracking that advertisers use. Advertisers are predictably unhappy with Mozilla s decision, of course, but the Post says that Mozilla executives are confident about the growing sophistication of tools they are building to limit the placement of cookies in users browsers such as their plan to add limits on cookies placed by sites users intentionally visit, such as Facebook, to prevent tracking when users sign off and go to other sites. Mozilla CTO Brendan Eich said that the organization s efforts to carry out a strong Do Not Track policy were the best way to change the dynamic so that trackers behave better.

Yahoo Rejects Fears Hackers Will Exploit Old User IDs

Yahoo Inc on Wednesday downplayed concerns that its plans to recycle inactive user IDs could leave users exposed to hackers, saying only 7 percent of those IDs are tied to actual Yahoo email accounts.

The Internet company, which announced last week it would release user IDs that have been inactive for more than 12 months so that other people can claim them, was pressed to defend the plan after critics warned that hackers who take control of inactive accounts could also assume the identities of the accounts’ previous owners.

Yahoo hopes the plan will spark fresh interest in its Web products like Mail, where users prefer individualized user IDs often derived from common names. But criticism of the plan comes at a time when fears over the security of personal information on the Internet have been heightened by revelations of massive U.S. government snooping and international online crime.

Yahoo stressed that it has put in place various safeguards, such as coordinating with other major Web companies including Google Inc and Amazon Inc to minimize the risk of identity theft.

The possibility of identity theft is "something we are aware of and we've gone through a bunch of different steps to mitigate that concern," said Dylan Casey, a senior director for consumer platforms. "We put a lot of thought, a lot of resources dedicated to this project."

Critics say hackers could claim inactive accounts for identity theft. If a Yahoo email is associated with a Google account, for instance, an identity thief with access to the Yahoo email account could use it to reset the Google account password and assume control.

Mat Honan, a Wired magazine writer who has previously written about being the victim of a devastating hacker attack, on Wednesday slammed Yahoo's plan as a "spectacularly bad idea."

"This is going to lead to a social engineering gold rush come mid-July," Honan wrote, referring to hacker tactic of obtaining passwords by deceiving people rather than cracking codes.

But Casey said that the vast majority of inactive accounts were more limited, used for services such as Yahoo's Fantasy Sports that are not tied to an email address and therefore not susceptible to identity theft.

Yahoo will also unsubscribe its inactive email accounts from mailing lists so that their new owners will not receive unwanted mail, Casey said.

"Can I tell you with 100 percent certainty that it's absolutely impossible for anything to happen? No. But we're going to extraordinary lengths to ensure that nothing bad happens to our users," Casey said.

Since the company announced its plans on June 12, users have 30 days to claim their inactive accounts before they are released, Yahoo said.

Where Teens Go Instead of Facebook (and Why You Should Too)

Remember a few years back, when teenagers left MySpace in droves for this new thing called Facebook? Grown-ups soon followed suit (not that they were ever much on MySpace), and joined Facebook by the hundreds of millions which made it far less cool for their kids. So where on the Web are teens going now, and what can you learn from them?

A recent study from the Pew Internet & American Life Project found that 94% of American teens still have a Facebook account, but they re using it less, and using it more carefully. More than half have tightened down their privacy settings and regularly delete or edit previous posts.

But even with tightened privacy settings, teens have realized that Facebook is more like a family picnic than the private party they want it to be. They still share photos and use Facebook messaging, but they are increasingly turning to newer social networks to fill the function of traditional status updates. So which sites are they using and why?

While teens do seem to understand privacy much better now than in the

early days of social media, they still have a desire to put themselves out there in a public way. And that s where microblogs like Tumblr and Pheed come in. The culture that has evolved on these sites is more slanted to creative self-expression than Facebook s life-casting (telling all the mundane details of your day). Both are deeply skewed towards mobile use, and there are tons of clever and thematic blogs, think Texts from Hillary or Reasons My Son is Crying.Neither are particularly teen-oriented, but there are clear differences in style and content between a Tumblr and a Facebook feed.

Twitter saw a doubling of teen users last year. And young people use it more publicly than they do Facebook; while teens with Facebook accounts typically keep their postings private, visible only to their friends, only 24% report keeping their tweets private. Since Twitter feels more instant than Facebook, it s a good one to consider if your musings are topical and timely.

Increasingly, the hot sites among the younger set create private networks, ones that automatically restrict who can see your updates, like Path, which limits your friend list to 150 people.This built-in privacy makes everything feel more personal though if you have 151 real-world friends, you ll just have to choose.

Instagram is pretty good for photo sharing, especially if you like using their funky filters. Teens thought that it great, until mom and dad showed up there, too.

So then came Snapchat, a way to send pics that self-destruct after being viewed. Except that assuming what you send will really disappear is fraught with peril, since the recipient can grab a permanent screen shot of a picture before its deleted. Still, Snapchat is hot to the tune of 150 million snaps a day for good reason: it is a fun way to share casual, goofy pics that aren t meant to signify deep meaning in your life. Just remember that, as with anything you post digitally, deleting may not really mean it can t come back to haunt you.

If you re paying as much as $20 a month (or really, any amount over zero) for texting on your phone, think about these alternatives: Kik and WhatsApp have bitten into Facebook messaging, especially here in the US. Globally, services like WeChat in China, KakaoTalk in Korea, and Line in the Middle East and Asia, are all on the rise. Using these services may eat a tiny bit into your data usage, but should enable you to reduce what you spend on your cell phone overall.

IBM System/360 Mainframe: Countdown to 50th Anniversary

IBM s System/360 mainframe the company s first mainframe system with a compatible, upgradable architecture turns 50 next year. Applications written for the S/360 can still run today, while prior systems were custom built, created for special purposes such as census taking. Big Blue’s signature big iron has been a core part of IT industry lore and remains at the heart of major transactional systems today. IBM has continued to evolve the mainframe, which is now used for cloud, big data, mobile and social computing workloads. Last August, IBM announced a major new version of its mainframe system, the zEnterprise EC12 mainframe server. IBM called the latest mainframe the most powerful and technologically

advanced version of an IBM system that has been the linchpin of enterprise computing for 49 years. Mainframes support significant portions of the data environment at most large enterprises, which today are looking for new ways to secure and gain insights from such critical information as financial, customer and enterprise resource data that will enable them to provide their clients with new services. The zEC12 a result of a more than $1 billion R&D investment offers enhanced security and support for operational analytics that can help clients sift through large volumes of raw data and transform it to gain knowledge that can be used for competitive advantage. This eWEEK slide show, produced with IBM, takes a look at where the IBM mainframe has come from and where it is headed.

First Apple Computer Could Fetch $500,000 or More

It’s the kind of electronic junk that piles up in basements and garages an old computer motherboard with wires sticking out.

But because it was designed and sold by two college dropouts named Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak, it could be worth more than half a million dollars.

An Apple 1 from 1976, one of the first Apple computers ever built and forerunner of today’s MacBooks, IPads and IPhones, goes on the auction block at Christie’s next week. The bidding starts at $300,000, with a pre-sale estimated value of up to $500,000.

"This is a piece of history that made a difference in the world, it’s where the computer revolution started," said Ted Perry, a retired school psychologist who owns the old Apple and has kept it stashed away in a cardboard box at his home outside Sacramento, Calif.

The 11-by-14 green piece of plastic covered with a grid of memory chips above a labyrinth of wires was one of the first 25 such computer elements, and sold for $666.66.

About 200 were made but most have disappeared or been discarded. Various estimates put the number known to still exist from about 30 to 50. They came with eight kilobytes of memory a million times less than the average computer today.

Vintage Apple products have become an especially hot item since Jobs’ death in October 2011, surrounding the mystique attached to this entrepreneur who joined forces with Wozniak to build computer prototypes in a California garage.

Another Apple 1 was sold last month for a record $671,400 by a German auction house, breaking a previous record of $640,000 set in November. Sotheby’s sold one last year for $374,500.

"This is the seed from which the entire orchard grew, and without this, there would be no Apple," said Stephen A. Edwards, professor of computer science at Columbia University. "I’ve been shocked auction prices got into the six digits. The market has just gone crazy."

The latest auction at Christie’s, "First Bytes: Iconic Technology from the Twentieth Century," is being conducted online only from June 24 to July 9.

The Apple 1 is to be displayed starting Monday at the Computer History Museum in Mountain View, south of San Francisco.

Perry, 70, acquired his Apple 1 in either 1979 or 1980, as a secondhand item he saw advertised.

He paid nothing for it; it was a swap with the owner.

"I traded some other computer equipment I had for the Apple 1," he said.

At the time, he was working as a psychologist in a school in Carmichael, a town near Sacramento. While observing special needs children, he noticed that a teletype machine "made a huge difference" in how a deaf boy using it responded and learned.

As the first computers came on the market, Perry learned to program them. Then he approached Wozniak, who agreed to provide what the psychologist calls Apple's "internal code" so he could create interactive lessons for his students using the new technology.

An expert hired by Christie's recently came to Perry's home to examine the old Apple and try to turn it on. Only the Apple motherboard is original. A keyboard, monitor and a storage device in this case a portable cassette tape deck were added later.

"I was a little afraid to run it, but it still works, with the original chips!" he says.

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